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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage June 7 on the 2008 presidential election; on the government's proposed minimum wage hike starting July 1 and its impact on local businesses; on a car accident involving a local singer; and on an alleged corruption scandal involving the Air Force Academy. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" ran a banner headline on page seven that said "Bush Praises Taiwan's Democracy and Criticizes China for Its Failure to Reform [Itself]."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, in response to an op-ed in Wednesday's "Liberty Times" saying that President Chen Shui-bian misunderstands the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), President Chen argued personally in an op-ed in today's "Liberty Times" that he does not misunderstand the TRA. Chen said as a head of state elected by his people, he needs to put Taiwan's national interests and his people's well being as top priority and will strive for the most favorable conditions for Taiwan. A "Liberty Times" editorial criticized China's tyrannical nature and said there is "a big gap between its role in the international community and the so-called 'responsible stakeholder.'" An editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News" lashed out at the DPP administration for its criticism of the white paper published by the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) recently. The article said the DPP government should view AmCham's warnings as honest and sincere advice in terms of Taiwan's role in international trade and economics. End summary.

A) "A-Bian Does Not Misunderstand the TRA"

President Chen Shui-bian wrote in an op-ed in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] (6/7):

"... First, my interpretation of the 'Taiwan Relations Act' (TRA) might differ from that of Professor Chiang, but [he] cannot simply determine that 'A-Bian misunderstands the TRA.' I cited Section 4(b)(1) of TRA on May 29: 'Whenever the laws of the United States refer to or relate to foreign countries, nations, states, governments, or similar entities, such terms shall include and such laws shall apply with respect to Taiwan.' I therefore believe that this statement should be interpreted as 'the TRA clearly regards Taiwan as a country.' Such interpretation was not created by me alone. Ambassador Harvey Feldman, who personally joined in the formulation of the TRA then also held the same view, which was also accepted by other scholars who have been paying long-term attention to Taiwan-U.S. relations, such as Professor John Tkacik. Each person may have different comprehension and understanding of the TRA, but A-Bian definitely does not misunderstand the TRA.

"Second, according to the 'three communiques' between the United States and China - namely, the 'Shanghai Communique,' the Joint Communique on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China,' and the 'August 17 Communique' - the United States has always indicated that it 'recognizes' Beijing's position that 'there is only one

China, and Taiwan is part of China;' that it [i.e. the United States] does not acknowledge that 'the People's Republic of China's' sovereignty claim on Taiwan. ... Third, my remarks that day had another key point -- namely, the Section 4(d) of TRA says '[N]othing in this Act may be construed as a basis for supporting the exclusion or expulsion of Taiwan from continued membership in any international financial institution or any other international organization.' Thus, based on the TRA, Taiwan is entitled to participate in the international organizations, including the World Health Organization and the United Nations.

"The triangular relationship among the United States, China, and Taiwan is very complex and full of vagueness and ambiguity. Also, given China's continued military intimidation and shutting out Taiwan diplomatically, Taiwan, as a nation, is in very difficult circumstances. But [we] must not take various [instances of] unjust and unreasonable treatment as a given and thus limit ourselves or flinch simply because we have been under constant suppression. Provisions in a law are alive and not dead; it all depends on how to interpret and explain them. One should not put the equal sign between the lack of diplomatic relations or acknowledgement between the two countries, Taiwan and the United States, and the matter of whether Taiwan is a country and whether it is entitled to all the rights and interests a country deserves. This is the important spirit that has been constantly emphasized and revealed by the TRA. While someone who is engaged in academic research may feel free to adopt the strictest criteria to 'discuss laws from the perspective of law,' as a state leader directly elected by his people, I must put the nation's interests and the people's well being as my priority concerns at all times, and I must try the best I can to strive for the most favorable conditions for Taiwan. ..."

B) "Steadfastness and Determination Are the Only Way to Confront China"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000]

editorialized (6/7):

"... Indeed, neither UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon nor U.S. State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack supported the idea of linking the crisis in Darfur with the Beijing Olympic Games. But as long as China refuses to change its tyrannical nature, the pressure from the international community demanding human rights and humanitarianism will surely swarm [to Beijing] until the time when the Olympic Games are held in August, 2008.

"The Olympic Games in Beijing will become a new point of pressure for the international community to push for [China's] peaceful transformation. History has shown that, ever since the 1970s, the United States' policy of hoping to use engagement to induce China to change has never succeeded. Without a doubt, major changes have happened in China over the past three decades. But the authoritarian rule of the [Chinese] Communist Party remains unchanged; China never gets lenient in its persecution of dissidents, and its human rights record has been notorious. There is even a big gap between its role in the international community and the so-called 'responsible stakeholder.' ..."

C) "How Does the United States Intervene in Taiwan's Domestic Affairs?"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (6/7):

"... The desperate and low-spirited tone in such discourse of the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) was evident, but most of the basic thinking in it has been 'talked about for fifteen years.' What differed this year from the previous ones was that our 'ranking officials from the Council of Economic Planning and Development' (CEPD) were furious [at AmCham's white paper] and replied in a rare tone that 'the remarks by U.S. businesses have crossed the line expected of foreign businesses, and they sound allegedly like intervention in [Taiwan's] domestic affairs!'

"Intervening in [Taiwan's] internal affairs? What a strong accusation! In fact, is this the only time that the United States

has 'interfered' in Taiwan's 'domestic affairs?' ... Taiwan's 'domestic affairs' have indeed been under strong 'intervention' of the United States. To find out the reasons why, [one can find] three factors inter-working and influencing each other: First, Taiwan is aware that it must accept the United States' 'intervention,' because with intervention comes protection. Second, the United States must 'interfere with' Taiwan, or it will not know how to maintain Taiwan's safety, and it will be difficult to estimate the price for keeping Taiwan safe. Third, the mutual trust between Washington and Taipei has been deteriorating starting from [the reign of] Lee Teng-hui to [that of] Chen Shui-bian, and the level of U.S. intervention has been growing as well. Now even the contents of [Taiwan's] constitutional re-engineering needs to be approved by the United States.

"Given the trend of deteriorating relationship of 'interference/trust' between Taiwan and the United States, it seemed that the CEPD authorities did not find out until now the new offences of 'the U.S. intervention in Taiwan's internal affairs.' Isn't it ridiculous? Isn't it pathetic? Those high-ranking CEPD officials should be aware that since 'U.S. interference in Taiwan's internal affairs' is inevitable, why not [try to] improve Taiwan's role in international trade and economics via the U.S. 'intervention,' in the hope of improving and strengthening Taiwan's conditions for self-reliance? It would be [much better] than striving to purchase weapons from the United States in exchange for its 'intervention.'

"Indeed, the United States hopes that Taiwan can build up its armaments so that the island can establish its self-defense capabilities. But on the other hand, Washington hopes that Taiwan can improve its role in international trade and economics, in particular, improving the cross-Strait trade relations by means of [opening] direct links, in an attempt to strengthen the conditions for Taiwan's survival. It is a widely known fact that armaments are 'hard defense' while trade and economics are 'soft defense.' Judging by Taiwan's internal and external situations, military buildup is just a factor contributing to a small part of maintaining [Taiwan's] national defense, while the sustainable development of trade and economics is the main structure that holds up the major part of [the island's] 'national defense.'

"AmCham's tone sounded like interfering in [Taiwan's] internal affairs, but the warnings it offered, such as 'Taiwan will get into a big trouble as early as next year' and 'it will likely be game over [for Taiwan]' are actually remarks out of its compassion for fear that 'someone might get in trouble.' They can also be viewed as an honest and sincere advice for Taiwan's 'national defense of trade and economics.'

"The DPP government has been behaving obsequiously when it comes to arms procurements, but it scolded and called AmCham's advice on trade and economics as 'interfering in [Taiwan's] domestic affairs.' Is it really so that the DPP government is only aware of spending a humongous amount of money busying the U.S. missiles to defend Taiwan (and allowing this part of its 'internal affairs' to be 'interfered' by the United States), while it has no idea that it should improve Taiwan's role in international trade and economics through U.S.-Taiwan cooperation so as to create [more favorable] conditions for the island's survival (shutting down and disallowing the United States to 'interfere in' this part of its 'internal affairs'))?

"The United States expects Taiwan's 'cross-Strait policy' to be 'defensive in politics but open in economics.' Taiwan will not be able to defend itself if it fails to keep defensive in politics, and it will not be able to survive if it is not open in economics. The DPP administration only sees that the United States can sell weapons to Taiwan, but it purposely overlooks the fact that the United States can also play a proactive role in building a win-win trade and economic relationship across the Taiwan Strait. ..."

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